GLOUCESTER.

THE destruction of the noble cathedral of this city, as already noted by us, was lately threatened by a fire which broke out in the College School. The library of the school, which communicates with it, is over the Chapter-room, on the north side of the cathedral, and abutting against the north transept. But for great exertions, the fire must have extended to the north transept.

There have been several other fires in Gloucester since.

Another effort has been made in the town council to induce the establishment of a museum, and Mr. Bowly deserves credit for having done his utmost to induce the council to obtain accommodation for this purpose. We are sorry to say the proposition was negatived: that a city like Gloucester should have no museum is disgraceful to its many wealthy denizens. Not long ago a fine collection was offered them if they would but provide a proper place for its reception. Renew your efforts, Mr. Bowly, and persevere until you succeed.

THE SHIELD OF ÆNEAS—PITTS THE SCULPTOR.

SINCE you published my remark on the shield of Æneas last week, I have learned that on the death of Mr. Pitts, Messrs. Mortimer and Hunt (now Hunt and Roskill), spontaneously offered Mrs. Pitts 500*l.* for the model of the same, which offer was at once accepted by Mrs. Pitts, she reserving the right of disposing of casts in wax or plaster. At present no such casts have been made. The "Shield of Hercules from Hesiod," is still in the possession of Mr. Pitts' family. The "Pleiades adorning Night," was sold for only 50*l.*, not the value of the time employed in making the cast from the model. In describing the working of the shield in silver, I ought to have mentioned that the silver plates are brought, by bending and hammering them, into form over a hard metallic cast taken from the model before they are placed on the pitchy substance for chasing and finishing. Δ.

METROPOLITAN COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

OPINION OF THE LAW OFFICERS.

A GENERAL court of the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers was held yesterday at the district office, Hatton Garden, Mr. Edward Lawes in the chair.

The court was held in consequence of the immense number of defaulters in the payment of sewer-rates; amounting altogether to nearly 10,000. This large number was produced partly in consequence of a practice which formerly existed in this commission, under the Local Act, 54th Geo. 3, c. 212, s. 10, to forego all sewer-rates on houses that were for any period unoccupied.

Long before the hour of commencing business, the vicinity of the office was so densely crowded with this immense number of appellants, that Hatton Garden was rendered almost impassable, and it required the assistance of a large body of police to preserve any thing like order. On the opening of the court the rush for admission was tremendous.

The New Islington Cattle Market.—The solicitor to Islington cattle market appealed against the rate, not wholly, but for such portion of it as was charged on the part appropriated as a layer for cattle, extending to fifteen acres. This part of the market had hitherto not been used for the purposes intended, or for any profitable purpose whatever. After some discussion it was agreed that a case should be drawn up by the solicitor to the company, and the subject receive further consideration.—The rest of the appeals were disposed of, the question of empty houses being reserved for future consideration.

The Closed-door Business of the Commission.—Mr. Leslie then rose and said, it became his duty to move that the case and opinion of the attorney and solicitor general, as to the mode of conducting the business of the commission by committee, be printed and circulated amongst the commissioners. The case, as submitted, consists of nearly forty sheets of brief paper, but the following are the questions embracing the main point referred for the consideration of the law officers of the Crown, with their answer thereto:—

QUESTIONS.

You are requested to advise the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers if they can lawfully perform their duties by such subdivision of labour as might be effected by means of committees appointed by the court, and consisting respectively of a limited number of commissioners, acting under the control of the court; and to what extent can the court delegate its authority to a committee, or sub-committee; and what, if any authority could be conferred on a limited number of commissioners to regulate works of a given kind, as, for instance, the cleansing of sewers, ditches, drains, &c., under sections 80, 82, and 86, or to regulate and manage the works of the commission generally.

If the court can make such delegation, would the orders of the committee, which might involve the entering into contracts, requiring works to be done and paid for, or imposing burdens on parties, be of force until afterwards confirmed by a court of sewers?

You will also please advise if the commissioners may appoint officers and make any regulations for the conduct of their business and appointment of committees, without previously making formal bye-laws under the 123rd section of the new Act. * * * * * *

OPINION.

We think that the commissioners may lawfully perform all duties of mere regulation and management by means of committees specifically appointed for the specific purpose under the 21st section, and of direction and superintendence of works and operations in progress by means of one or two commissioners appointed according to the 23rd section. The Act says nothing about sub-committees.

Orders for works and expenditure, decrees, rates, bye-laws, and other things which the commissioners have authority to do, must originate with the court which speaks by its seal, and whose proceedings are public and recorded.

That original authority cannot be delegated, nor can any committee be empowered to use the seal. Under an order of court defining the purposes of the appointment, and referring the specific subject, a committee may lawfully conduct the details of business which the commissioners have directed to be done. It cannot, indeed, enter into contracts, for those need the seal, nor render works or burdens obligatory, for such obligation can be created only by act of court. The committee can originate no business, but any letters, plans, or accounts may be referred to a committee; and it may not only report on any matters referred to it for the information of the court, but also, under the 21st section, regulate and manage for every purpose indicated in their appointment all matters referred to them specifically by the court. In all details not requiring that act of court, by which alone the commissioners, as a body, can act. Practically this limitation of the powers of the committee leaves a wide scope for the subdivision of the labours of the commissioners. Committees may be empowered from time to time, by appointment for the specific purpose, to suggest plans, consider reports of officers, prepare and arrange details of works, and regulate and manage matters referred to them specifically by order of the court. Each committee should be appointed by an order of the court, fixing the quorum, and defining the mode of discharging the business referred to it from time to time by the court, and should report its acts to the court by means of the minutes of proceedings. Each court will exercise its discretion as to continuing, altering, or discontinuing the committee; and where any new matter is referred, or new purpose contemplated, it must be embodied in an express order of court. * * *

Rules of general and permanent application would be "Bye-laws," and must be made according to the provisions of the 123rd section, and no new or additional offices can be created without a bye-law.

* * * * * *

(Signed) JOHN JERVIS,
JOHN ROMILLY,
Temple, 10th March, 1849. J. HENDERSON.

After a few words from the Hon. F. Byng, Mr. Leslie's motion was put and carried unanimously, and the court adjourned.

Books.

Rudimentary Treatise on Geology, by Lieut.-Col. PORTLOCK, F.R.S.

Rudimentary Electricity, being a concise exposition of the general principles of electrical sciences and the purposes to which it has been applied, by Sir W. SNOW HARRIS, F.R.S.

Rudimentary Mechanics, being a concise exposition of the general principles of mechanical science, by CHARLES TOMLINSON.

Rudimentary Treatise on Well-digging, Boring, and Pump Work, by J. G. SWINDELL, M.I.B.A., with 16 plates. London: Weale, 1849.

Mr. WEALE'S series of Rudimentary Works for beginners, of which these are four, has now advanced to a considerable extent, and forms a goodly range of little red books, well calculated to be of service to the rising generation. Each subject is treated briefly but perspicuously, and the name of the author is a guarantee of the general soundness of the views advanced.

Mr. Swindell's treatise would be found particularly useful by several correspondents who have recently questioned us on the subject of well-digging and boring.

Relative to one part of the series reviewed by us some time since, namely, the treatise on "The Orders," a correspondent complains that in the second edition of it, which has been published, the definition of "copying," given in the first, is omitted.

"Copying," says the author, "is the process of converting design into manufacture, and an architect into a machine." "This (continues our correspondent) is a truth that every architect ought to know. Everybody cries out that architecture has declined, and at the present day we cannot produce such splendid works as those of our forefathers. Very true—but why? Because at the present day the principles of composition are usurped by the principles of copyism, and he who makes the most perfect copy is lauded as a genius; whereas he who attempts to produce a new work upon æsthetic principles is pooh-poohed as an innovator, a booby who presumes to think, when thought is quite unnecessary in the architecture of the nineteenth century." He calls on the publisher to restore the definition in subsequent issues, and we offer no objection.

Miscellanea.

ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE.—A capital little piece by Mr. Planché, called "A Romantic Idea," in which Mr. Charles Mathews, Mr. Hall, Mr. Roxby, Miss Fitzwilliam, and others play admirably, has given Mr. W. Beverley an occasion for two architectural paintings of considerable excellence. The first is the ruins of a roofless hall in a German castle, with the tower at the back, and the whole bathed in the mild moon beams, a beautiful piece of effect, and in no way offending an architectural eye in the details. The second shews the hall restored; and remembering the "villanous compounds" which Gothic interiors some years ago usually presented on our stage, claims for Mr. Beverley great praise for congruous design as well as good painting. The sudden re-transformation to the ruin is very striking and effective.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE OF CIVIL ENGINEERS AND ARCHITECTS, BIRMINGHAM.—The heads of Queen's College, Birmingham, have matured a plan for the addition of an engineering department to the college on a site adjoining, recently purchased. They have resolved, in confirming a report of the committee appointed to mature the plan, that lecture rooms, model rooms, workshop, laboratory, and students' chambers be forthwith erected, and opened next October; that tutors and professors be appointed, the latter to give lectures on civil engineering, land surveying, practical mathematics, geometrical and architectural drawing, geology, mineralogy, and the arts of construction; that the system of tuition embrace a three years' course; that an engineering workshop be furnished, also a model room; that junior students be of the age of about sixteen, and those for the three years' course about eighteen; that students prepare for matriculation in the University of London end of first year, and for taking their B.A. degree in same University end of third year; and that students who have matriculated and graduated be admissible as candidates for fellowships in Queen's College.

THE BURIAL IN TOWNS QUESTION.—It will be seen, by an advertisement, that a public meeting will be held at the late Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, on the 4th of April, to petition Parliament to close burial places in cities and towns; Mr. Bond Cabbell, M.P., will preside. The great importance of the question is becoming gradually felt. The City Sewers Commissioners have been stirring actively in it, and have caused the discontinuance of burials at St. Bride's. A correspondent who forwarded to us a short time since a plan of the abominable Spa-fields ground and the neighbourhood, suggested that a plan of the town, showing clearly all these plague-spots, and accompanied by a few statistics, could not fail to have a powerful effect on the public.

HOUSE-PAINTERS' BRUSHES.—Mr. Nash, a manufacturer, has registered a supposed improvement in painters' brushes: it consists in the use of a metal binding, of circular form, flattened into a somewhat oval shape at the upper part of the brush near the flags of the bristles, with the view to cause the top of the brush to be flattened at the back and front of the same, in order to afford better surfaces for use. The asserted advantages of this arrangement are, that by the substitution of the metallic binding for strings wound round the flags of the bristles—as now in common use—or of wire, the brushes are not so liable to come to pieces or allow loose hairs to come out. Whether or not the increased strain on the workman's wrist, slight though the extra weight may be, will be found disadvantageous, remains to be seen.

COMPETITION.—Five pounds are offered for a plan (to be approved of by a committee) for the erection of a school-room at Deptford.

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